

Cuivre River

Conservation Opportunity Area



Central Dissected
Till Plains



Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area offers a glimpse of the Ozarks in north Missouri.

Bruce Schuette, Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) contains many natural features (caves, sinkholes, glades, springs and rocky creeks) found more often in southern Missouri. Prairies and oak savannas formerly occupied scattered hilltops and graded into oak woodlands and forests. Today, most prairies and bottomlands have been transformed into pasture and croplands. A few large blocks of second-growth timber remain in areas with rugged terrain.

The Cuivre River Hills provide habitat for over 20 species of conservation concern. Many Ozark plants and animals are found at their northern limits here, including ringed salamanders, marbled salamanders and spotted salamanders that breed in sinkhole ponds;

adder's tongue fern, slender heliotrope and Missouri orange coneflower in limestone glades; banded sculpin and northern studfish in streams; and widow's cross on rock outcrops. Large patches of natural habitat support 40 species of nesting neotropical migrant birds. Many other birds use the Cuivre River Hills as an important stopover place on their migration routes.

Big Sugar Creek runs through Cuivre River State Park. This Ozark-like stream is ranked as one of the best protected streams in northeast Missouri. Several decidedly Ozark fish, including banded sculpins and northern studfish, occur here at the northern edge of their range.

Cuivre River Hills Conservation Strategies:

- Restore woodland, savanna, prairie, glade and forest natural communities and karst features.
- Work with willing private landowners to deliver conservation services. Encourage county and municipal officials to use watershed planning and “smart-growth” principles.
- Restore riparian corridors in the Big Sugar Creek watershed.
- Establish control programs for invasive exotic species (e.g. bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, European buckthorn).
- Educate landowners and local citizens on the importance and value of conservation practices.
- Establish a Stream Team to monitor stream health and conduct projects on local creeks.



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Lincoln Hills Natural Area includes a quarter-acre sinkhole pond within Cuivre River State Park. The pond contains aquatic plants, including pickerel weed and American lotus, and provides breeding habitat for several amphibians rarely encountered north of the Missouri River.

Priority Research and Inventory Needs

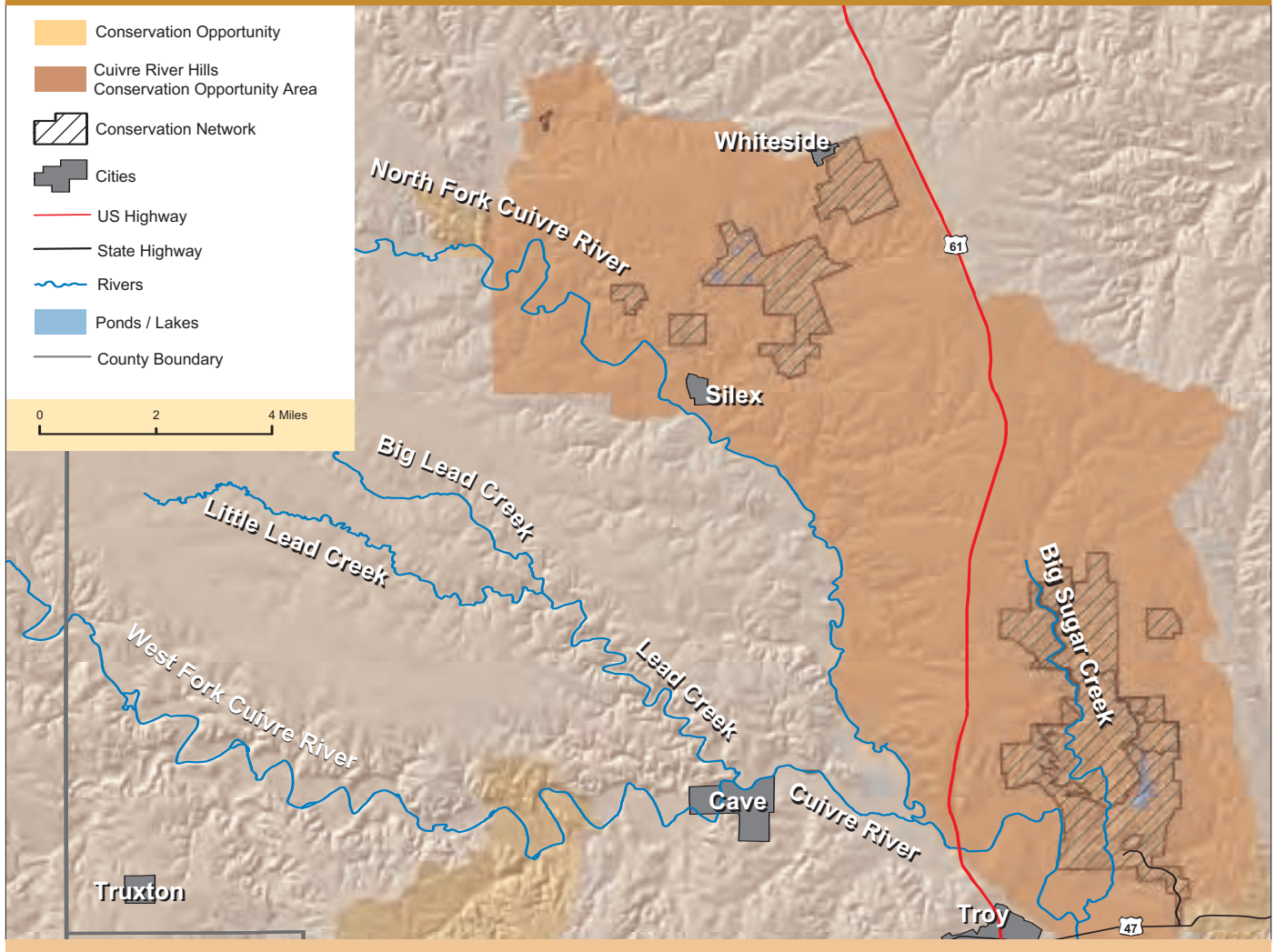
- Conduct a natural features inventory of Logan Conservation Area.
- Survey for Indiana bats.
- Continue surveys of plants and animals, especially invertebrates.
- Inventory the presence and extent of invasive exotic species.

Conservation Partners

Existing: Missouri Prairie Foundation (MPF); Girl Scout Council of Greater St. Louis; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Lincoln County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

Potential: The Nature Conservancy; National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf); Missouri Native Plant Society – St. Louis Chapter; Webster Groves Nature Study Society; St. Louis Audubon Society; Missouri Stream Teams; Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (MCHF); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

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Funding Sources

Existing: DNR annual budget; MDC annual budget; Lincoln County SWCD State Cost Share Funds; NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program; NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program; Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program

Promising Future Sources: MDC Wildlife Diversity Funds; MDC State Wildlife Grants; MCHF grants; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; NWTF Wild Turkey Super Fund; Quail Unlimited Quail Habitat Incentive Funds

Existing Conservation Network

Cuivre River State Park (Lincoln Hills Natural Area, George A. Hamilton Forest Natural Area, Big Sugar Creek Natural Area); Logan Conservation Area; White Conservation Area; Vonaventure Conservation Area; Kessler Conservation Area; Sandy Creek Natural Tunnel and Glade Natural Area; Girl Scout Camp Tuckaho



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Ringed salamanders are endemic to the Ozarks – they are found nowhere else in the world. The forested Ozark-like conditions of the Cuivre River Hills allow it to support the northernmost population of ringed salamanders.

Prairie Restoration



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Prairie and savanna openings once occurred on flatter hilltops of the Cuivre River Hills, but today are extremely rare. Prairie restorations at Cuivre River State Park have been some of the most successful in the St. Louis area, now providing a local seed source for other prairie restoration projects.

Conservation Challenges

Several large blocks of woods are still found in rugged areas of the Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area. Most prairies, savannas, open woodlands and glades, however, have been converted

to pasture and cropland. Potential obstacles to conservation success include urbanization and the rapid pace of development, invasive exotic species and limited budgets and staff time.

To learn more about the Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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